

Williamsburg, VA

Overview:

Similar to the Alexandria's Old Town Historic District, the City of Williamsburg, VA also contains a historic area that serves as a major tourist attraction. The core historic area, known as Colonial Williamsburg, contains several historic streets, structures and attractions. Certain streets within the historic area are completely closed to motor vehicle traffic of any kind. A visitor center, located on the north side of the historic area, serves as the main staging area for group visits. The city has implemented certain policies to manage tour buses and motor coaches. The city code of ordinances governs mainly the operation – standing, parking, use of certain streets – of motor coaches. Within the historic area certain streets prohibit through bus traffic and the city has also designated certain streets for loading/unloading passengers. The city requests, but does not mandate, that bus operators do not idle their engines any longer than what is absolutely necessary. A 15 minute time limitation is in place for picking up and discharging passengers within the designated loading zones and buses/coaches are prohibited from parking in those areas. Long-term parking is available at the visitor center, while overnight parking is available at motels in the surrounding area.

In 2006, to further manage and accommodate tour buses and coaches traveling to Colonial Williamsburg a tour bus center was built. The center, funded by the Colonial Williamsburg Foundation and operated by Penske, provides long-term and overnight parking, driver's lounge facilities, and a service center. The Penske Center is open seven days a week from 7:00AM-11:00PM on weekdays and 7:00AM-3:30PM on weekends. Currently the center is not experiencing the level of use the city had hoped for and this is mainly the result of a poor signage and the center's location away from the visitor center and main attractions.

The Williamsburg Police Department appears to be the lead agency in charge of disseminating information regarding tour bus operations within Colonial Williamsburg and the enforcement of tour bus regulations. The Department's website contains information on the regulations currently in place and a link to information on the Penske Center. Additionally, a map of the historic area which indicates street closures, loading zones and parking facilities is available online. According to the police department, enforcement of current motor coach rules and regulations consists mainly of informing bus operators of any violations they commit and then directing them to proper parking or loading locations.

Sources:

City of Williamsburg, Police Department. Phone interview with Jay Sexton.

City of Williamsburg, Police Department website. Accessed via <http://www.williamsburgva.gov/Index.aspx?page=455>